

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO

SUBJ: A JORDANIAN VIEW OF QUADRIpartite TALKS

1. SUMMARY: ROYAL CONFIDANT ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI SKEPTICAL CONCERNING ANY POSITIVE OUTCOME OF QUADRIpartite MEETING. HE ANALYZES CURRENT QUADRIpartite RELATIONS AS FOLLOWS: PLO UNSUCCESSFUL IN ATTEMPT OBTAIN GOJ PERMISSION TO USE JORDAN TERRITORY FOR INFILTRATION TO WEST BANK BUT STILL ANXIOUS TO ESTABLISH DIRECT CHANNEL OF CONTACT TO JORDAN, SINCE PLO RESTIVE UNDER SYRIAN MEDIATION. SYRIA FEARFUL OF BEING ODD MAN OUT IN MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS AND THEREFORE USING CHAMPIONING OF PLO AS POLITICAL COUNTERWEIGHT TO EGYPT. SYRIAN (BUT NOT EGYPTIAN) OBJECTIVES ARE FORMATION JOINT ARAB DELEGATION TO GENEVA, OR, FAILING THAT, CLOSE ARAB COORDINATION REGARDING ANY BILATERAL (READ EGYPTIAN) NEGOTIATIONS. IN VIEW CURRENT UNCLEAR MIDEAST SITUATION, ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI PERSONALLY FAVORS CONTINUING JORDAN PARTICIPATION IN ARAB MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS AS MEANS TO PERMIT JORDAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF POSSIBLE FAVORABLE FUTURE TURN OF EVENTS REGARDING WEST BANK. SIMILARLY, HE FAVORS GO-SLOW POLICY DOMESTICALLY REGARDING ANY FURTHER CHANGES IN LAWS ON PALESTINIAN NATIONALITY AND ELECTORAL ISSUES. RIFAI THINKS SYRIA AND EGYPT NOT INTERESTED IN RESUMING HOSTILITIES WITH ISRAEL BUT BELIEVES CONTINUED

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MOMENTUM TOWARDS PEACE ESSENTIAL TO AVERT DRIFT TOWARDS WAR.

END SUMMARY.

2. IN DISCUSSIONS DECEMBER 28 WITH AMBASSADOR MURPHY (WHO PERSONAL FRIEND OF RIFAI AND CURRENTLY ON VISIT FROM DAMASCUS) AND CHARGE SENATOR AND ROYAL CONFIDANT ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI HAD FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON CURRENT STATE OF INTER-ARAB RELATIONS PRIOR TO QUADRIPARTITE MEETING.

3. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE QUESTION IN JORDAN'S MIND OVER PRECISELY WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED AT EGYPT, SYRIA, JORDAN, PLO QUADRIPARTITE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING, WHICH NOW POSTPONED UNTIL JAN 4. JORDAN IS MAINLY CONCENTRATING ON QUESTION OF ITS UPCOMING BILATERAL TALKS WITH EGYPT WHICH PM RIFAI WILL BE STARTING IN CAIRO TODAY (DECEMBER 29).

4. AS TO SUBSTANCE OF QUADRIPARTITE TALKS, RIFAI SAID KING HUSSEIN HAD ASKED HIM TO DRAW UP A LIST OF POSSIBLE SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION BUT THAT RIFAI HAD BEEN AT A LOSS TO COME UP WITH ANYTHING FRUITFUL. JORDAN AND EGYPT HAD BOTH BEEN RELUCTANT TO HOLD QUADRIPARTITE AT ALL AND JORDANIANS HAVE DISCOURAGED PLO (LAST SUCH EFFORT WAS LAST WEEK) FROM BRINGING UP PLO'S MAIN CONCERN, I.E. REQUEST TO USE JORDAN AS BASE FOR CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS INTO WEST BANK/ISRAEL. FURTHERMORE, PROSPECT OF EARLY RESUMPTION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE SEEMS SUFFICIENTLY DIM THAT IT WOULD NOT APPEAR TO MERIT ANY SERIOUS INTER-ARAB CONSULTATIONS AT THIS TIME.

5. ABDUL MINEIM ASSESSED ONE OF PLO TACTICAL OBJECTIVES ON EVE OF QUADRIPARTITE CONFERENCE AS BEING "THE PAVING OF A ROAD" DIRECTLY BETWEEN IT AND JORDAN. RIFAI SAID HE THINKS PLO INCREASINGLY RESTIVE WITH ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY IT MUST USE SYRIA OR EGYPT AS INTERMEDIARY WITH JORDAN. HE SAID SYRIANS BEHAVIOR INDICATES THAT SYRIA TRYING TO USE ITS ROLE AS CHAMPION OF PLO INTERESTS AS A MEANS OF EXERTING POLITICAL COUNTER-WEIGHT TO EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD, TO FORESTALL BEING ISOLATED AND EVENTUALLY LEFT OUT OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL. SOVIETS APPEAR TO SUPPORT THIS SYRIAN STRATEGY.

6. ACCORDINGLY, SYRIAN OBJECTIVE AT QUADRIPARTITE TALKS MAY BE TO FORM ALL-ARAB DELEGATION TO A GENEVA CONFERENCE, OR, FAILING
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THAT, TO PROMOTE AGREEMENT TO CLOSE JOINT CONSULTATIONS REGARDING QUESTION OF ANY BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL. THIS IDEA WOULD PROBABLY BE ANATHEMA TO EGYPT.

7. ABDUL MUNEIM SAID THAT IDEA OF JORDAN ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA TALKS, INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP IN JOINT ARAB DELEGATION WOULD HAVE ADVANTAGES TO JORDAN. HE SAID HE FELT JOINT ARAB DELEGATION COULD ALSO SOLVE ISRAEL'S PROBLEM OF DEALING DIRECTLY IN

NEGOTIATIONS WITH PLO (AND VICE VERSA). SUCH PARTICIPATION WOULD ALSO PERMIT JORDAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF POSSIBLE FUTURE TURNS CONCERNING SITUATION AND NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING WEST BANK, WHICH COULD PUT JORDAN BACK IN THE PICTURE THERE.

8. UNDER SIMILAR LOGIC, ABDUL MUNEIM RIFAI SAID HE PERSONALLY OPPOSES TAKING ANY DECISIVE CHANGES IN JORDANIAN LAWS WITH REGARD TO PALESTINIAN QUESTION. JORDANIANS HAVE TAKEN SOME STEPS TO REFLECT ADHERENCE TO RABAT SUMMIT, BUT, UNDER CURRENT UNCERTAIN CONDITIONS REGARDING WEST BANK AND FUTURE OF MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS JORDAN SHOULD NOT PAINT ITSELF INTO ANY CORNERS REGARDING NATIONALITY OR ELECTORAL LAWS.

9. HIS PERSONAL VIEW IS THAT STEPS REGARDING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (WHICH ARE DUE IN ONE YEAR) SHOULD BE DELAYED AND THEN ONLY DEALT WITH ADMINISTRATIVELY. RIFAI SAID NEW PARLIAMENT WOULD REFLECT GREATER EAST BANK WEIGHT WITH ABSENCE OF WEST BANK CONSTITUENCIES, SINCE REGISTERED PALESTINIANS IN EAST BANK CONSTITUTE ONLY 10-12 PERCENT OF CURRENTLY REGISTERED VOTERS, WITH VIRTUALLY NO PALESTINIAN VOTERS REGISTERED FROM CAMPS OR FROM ZARQA AND IRBID AREA.

10. REGARDING MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS, ABDUL MUNEIM EXPRESSED CONVICTION THAT MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO KEEP UP MOMENTUM BY BRINGING ABOUT SOME FURTHER STEP TOWARD PEACE. CITING HIS RECENT MISSIONS TO EGYPT AND SYRIA ON BEHALF OF KING, HE SPOKE ADMIRINGLY OF POLICIES AND PERSONALITIES OF BOTH ASSAD AND SADAT, EXPRESSING CONVICTION THAT NEITHER WISHES ANOTHER WAR. ABDUL MUNEIM SAID USG HOWEVER SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE INTERNAL THREAT TO SADAT IF PEACE MOMENTUM IS STOPPED. HE ALSO INDICATED ASSAD WOULD BE UNDER HEAVY ATTACK BY IRAQI BAATH IF THERE IS NO MOVEMENT ON GOLAN.

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11. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH REMOVED FROM OFFICIAL POSITION AS ROYAL INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISOR, AND HE NOT NECESSARILY REFLECTING KING HUSSEIN'S VIEWS, ABDUL MUNEIM STILL APPEARS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ADVISING KING AND ABDUL MUNEIM'S NEPHEW PM RIFAI. HE RECENTLY UNDERTOOK MISSIONS TO ASSAD AND SADAT ON BEHALF OF KING AND IS REPORTEDLY CURRENTLY UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM KING TO FORMULATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOJ HANDLING OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ISSUE. RIFAI IN HIS ADVOCACY OF CONTINUED JORDANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN MIDEAST NEGOTIATING ISSUE AND OF MODERATION DOMESTICALLY ON DEALINGS WITH ISSUE AFFECTING PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS IS HOWEVER ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL INFLUENCES ACTING ON KING HUSSEIN; RIFAI'S VIEWPOINT IS OPPOSED PARTICULARLY BY SOME INFULENTIAL HARD-LINE EAST BANKERS. SUDDARTH

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